

HOUSEHOLD AND NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA



Edited by

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University of Zimbabwe UZ/MSU Food Research in Southern Africa

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**THE IMPACT OF BOTSWANA'S PULA FOR
WORK PROGRAMME ON FOOD ACCESS:
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS**

S. Asefa, A. Gyeke, and H. Siphambe

323

**SECTION 8: CONTRIBUTION OF SMALL-SCALE
RURAL ENTERPRISES TO EMPLOYMENT GENERATION
AND FOOD SECURITY**

**NONFARM INCOME AND FOOD SECURITY:
LESSONS FROM RWANDA**

D.C. Mead

331

**SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL
SWAZILAND: CURRENT STATUS AND RESEARCH
NEEDS**

P.M. Dlamini

339

**SMALL-SCALE RURAL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT
IN TANZANIA: CURRENT STATUS AND RESEARCH
NEEDS**

I.J. Minde

345

**SECTION 9: IMPACT OF IRRIGATION ON FOOD
SECURITY**

**IRRIGATION RESEARCH PRIORITIES FOR
SOUTHERN AFRICA**

M. Rukuni

359

**IRRIGATION AND FOOD SECURITY IN
SWAZILAND: CURRENT STATUS AND RESEARCH
PRIORITIES**

V.M. Sithole and J. Testerink

369

**IRRIGATION AND FOOD SECURITY:
CURRENT STATUS AND RESEARCH PRIORITIES
IN TANZANIA**

S. Sisila

383

IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE IN BOTSWANA

H. Segwele

391

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THE IMPACT OF BOTSWANA'S PULA FOR WORK PROGRAMME ON FOOD ACCESS: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Sisay Asefa, Agyapong Gyeke and Happy Siphambe¹

BACKGROUND

During the past seven years, Botswana has suffered from a continuous drought which had adversely affected its rural economy. In response, the government initiated the National Drought Relief Programme which has four components: human relief (supplementary feeding), agricultural relief and recovery, rural public works or pula² for work, (also known as labour-based relief), and a water supply programme.

The National Drought Relief Programme is coordinated by an Inter-Ministerial Drought Committee (IMDC) that comprises representatives from five key government ministries (Finance and Development Planning, Agriculture, Local Government and Lands, Education, and Health). The overall programme is linked to the national planning process by the National Food Strategy (NFS) that was prepared by the Government of Botswana in 1985. Two of the major goals of the NFS are to ensure a minimum acceptable diet for all of the population and to build a national capacity to contain the adverse effects of the recurrent drought (Botswana, 1985).

The focus of this study is on the pula for work component of the Drought Relief Programme, which originated in 1982 and is currently administered by the Food Resource Department in the Ministry of Local Government and Lands (MLGL). This single largest component of the National Drought Relief Programme has been allocated about P18 million (US\$11 million) since its inception.

This paper presents some preliminary results and draws some implications from a village-level case study of the impact of the pula for work programme conducted by the authors in the South East District of Botswana during the spring of 1988. The purpose of the broader study is to investigate Botswana's experience with the programme in relation to:

- o the magnitude and distribution of programme costs and benefits;
- o the impact of the programme on the welfare of participating households;
- o the significance of the programme in building social and physical infrastructure;
- o the potential targeting or leakage problem in the programme; and

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²Pula is a the currency unit of Botswana. The exchange rate is approximately P1.00 = US\$ 0.60.

- o the constraints and opportunities for improving programme effectiveness, including its potential in contributing to employment and income generation.

This paper reviews preliminary results, focusing on two of the critical issues of the pula for work programme, namely :

- o the targeting or leakage problem which is concerned with whether the criteria used in participant selection is adequately enforced; and
- o the impact of the programme on providing access to food for the participating households (*i.e.*, whether income received from the programme has increased food consumption).

The next section of the paper briefly summarizes the preliminary findings of the survey. The final section draws some implications about the impact of the programme on increasing access to food for participating households.

SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The preliminary findings are based on analysis of data from a survey of 70 households in Ramotswa Village in the South East District of Botswana. The sample is stratified into 40 participants (30 regular participants and 10 supervisors) and 30 nonparticipants. This section compares participants and nonparticipants in the programme.

Demographic characteristics

The results show that the proportion of women in the participating group (59% females, and 41% male) is greater than the nonparticipating group (43% female and 57% male). The mean household size for the participants (9.4 persons) is larger than the nonparticipants mean household (6.5 persons). Of the participating households, 65% were engaged in agriculture, 10% in domestic service, 20% were unemployed, and 5% were engaged in some other work prior to joining the pula for work programme.

Income from government agricultural subsidy and drought relief assistance

A large proportion of participants indicated that they receive assistance from two of the government agricultural subsidy programmes, namely the Arable Lands Development Programme (ALDEP) and the Accelerated Rainfall Arable Programme (ARAP). None of the nonparticipating households indicated they receive assistance from ALDEP or ARAP.

Ownership of major assets

A greater number of participants than nonparticipants indicated that they own assets such as cattle, small stock, and a house.

Participation in pula for work activities

The six projects in the survey village, according to the participation rate, is as follows: dam construction (56.7%), rural road construction (26.7%), road

maintenance (16.7%), sorghum hand stamping (16.7%), village road construction (13.3%), and brick moulding (6.7%).

Programme personnel

In order to complement the detailed village-level case study, a survey of programme officials from 15 districts and sub-districts of Botswana was conducted. The following four categories of personnel were interviewed to gain insights about various drought relief programmes:

- o Drought Relief Technical Officers (DRTOs);
- o Drought Relief Coordinators (DRCs);
- o District Development Officers (DDOs); and
- o Council Planning Officers (CPOs).

Of the above categories, the DRTOs are the ones most directly engaged in the management of the pula for work programme at the district and sub-district level. The survey was conducted during March 2-4, 1988, at the Labour Based Relief Programme's annual workshop conducted in Gaborone which was attended by the researchers. Eighteen questions (13 closed and 5 open-ended) were included in the questionnaire. The main findings are as follows:

- o Thirty-two (80%) of the 40 workshop participants completed our questionnaire, including nine DRTOs, thirteen DRCs, two DDOs, five CPOs and three others.
- o When asked about who sets the criteria of participation, 56.3% answered the Village Development Council (VDC) and district administration, 22% answered the VDC, and the rest answered district administration, LBRP supervisors, or others.
- o On the question of what they think about the impact of the programme on food consumption and nutrition, 55% said it has a positive effect, 23% said it has a very significant positive effect, and 16% said it has a minor effect.
- o When asked about the impact of pula for work income on investment, 48.4% said that it has no impact because participants are too poor to invest, although they invest in education, and 25% answered participants invest on agricultural assets, livestock or some other form of investment.
- o On the question of what they thought about the effect of the pula for work projects on village or community welfare, 81 percent of the respondents said that projects have a moderate to substantial impact, while 19% said the projects have no impact on the social welfare of the village.
- o When asked about how useful is the infrastructure (dams, roads, etc.) directly created by the programme, 18% said that it is moderately to very useful, and 18% answered it is somewhat, or not useful.
- o On the question of who selects projects at the village level, 59.4% answered it is the VDC, while 25% answered it is the VDCs and DRTOs in cooperation, and 15.6% said projects are selected by some other party.
- o When asked if the selection criteria should be changed, 55% answered no, and 45% answered yes.

- o When asked about their recommendations for the future of the programme, 88% said it should be converted into a long-term programme and 9% said it should be modified and continued in its current form.
- o On the question of whether the programme creates any dependency of participants on government, 88% said it does, and 12% said it does not.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

In recent years, Botswana has implemented one of the most ambitious famine management and prevention programmes in Africa. These efforts have been judged to be quite successful (Holm and Morgan, 1985, and Holm and Cohen, 1986). Botswana's success in preventing famine in spite of persistent drought is partially due to its ability to finance a large famine prevention or drought relief programme by its diamond-based rapidly growing economy.

Two critical policy questions for Botswana's economic future, are: how long should it sustain this short-run drought relief programme, and how can it create a self-reliant, employment and income-generating rural economy that does not require continued government subsidies?

Our research from a village case study of the pula for work programme shows that the majority of the participants in the study sample are female-headed households with larger than average family size, compared to nonparticipants. Both participants and nonparticipants expressed the same degree of desire for future participation in the programme. The survey revealed that there is potential targeting inefficiency in the programme (i.e. people who should be participating, but are not participating). The problem of targeting inefficiency can be overcome through better project management and enforcement of participation criteria. More importantly, the programme can be made more efficient if it is converted and/or integrated into a long-term rural employment and income-generating rural development programme directly focused on the rural poor.

Programmes such as draft power assistance and ALDEP are components of the government's long-run agricultural development programmes that compete for labour with the pula for work programme. We believe Botswana needs to integrate the currently short-run focused pula for work programme into other government agricultural support programmes such as ALDEP in order to create a coherent long-term agricultural development and rural employment programme.

Our findings also show that participation in the pula for work programme is an important tool for preventing famine and providing food access for participants. On the other hand, income earned from the programme is too meagre to have any significant effect on nonfood expenditure and investment.

In summary, Botswana's pula for work programme is quite effective as a short-run mechanism for helping prevent famine and providing access to food during the drought period. However, the critical policy issues and problems of long-run income and employment generation necessary for winning the battle for achieving long-run food security and poverty reduction for all Botswana are yet to be tackled. Future policy-oriented research should focus on this critical question.

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